

Wood as a sustainable fuel source for the home

The SIA is pleased to endorse leading industry guidelines which establish a recognisable standard for logs used in wood burning stoves; an important step towards ensuring the continued sustainability of wood as a fuel source for the home.

The biomass fuel quality scheme, which covers logs, wood chip, pellets and briquettes, was developed by HETAS - the government-recognised body responsible for approving solid fuel domestic heating appliances, fuels and services. One of its key aims is to promote the use of seasoned logs from sustainable woodlands, and this is strongly supported by the SIA and leading suppliers of wood in the UK. The scheme is starting to benefit from increased recognition amongst consumers.

The HETAS Quality Assured Fuel scheme¹ (QAS), enables the public to easily identify stockists of quality wood fuel. This has helped to increase customer confidence in wood fuel supply and in turn has led to a significant increase in domestic use.

Key benefits of the HETAS QAS²:

- The wood fuel customer can be assured that they are buying the right product for their installation; both safe and efficient.
- Product labelling is consistent across suppliers which enables the consumer to make an informed choice.
- The scheme promotes a good model for sustainable wood fuel heating.

When harvested from efficiently managed forests, wood logs are obtained as a natural by-product of the thinning process. This is essential to the conservation of the forest, as it ensure there is sufficient light and space for the remaining trees to thrive. On a continuous cycle, felled trees are replaced and replanted, thereby preserving the woodland for future use. Wood logs are therefore virtually carbon neutral, and as a result, woodland is being increasingly recognised as a valuable resource for sustainable fuel.

In the home, it is essential that logs are thoroughly dried before burning, though no further treatment of the wood is required. Freshly harvested wood contains a naturally high amount of water, between 65-90% depending on the species, and experts recommend that wood is seasoned for at least a year, preferably two, before use in a wood burning stove.

Consumers can dry their own wood in a wood store or buy dry and seasoned wood from their supplier. However, for immediate burning, experts recommend buying kiln dried wood. These have an average moisture content of below 25% and consequently produce 4.5 kW/h per kg, compared to wet/freshly-cut wood and semi-dried logs, which produce 1.0 kW/h per kg and 3.0 kW/h per kg respectively. Using drier wood therefore means that fewer logs can be used to produce the same heat output; preventing the waste of money, labour, transport and storage associated with using more logs, all of which reduces the carbon footprint of the stove. One of the leading companies supplying kiln dried wood, Certainly Wood, uses wood waste to fuel the kilns; making the process sustainable and environmentally friendly.

The key elements of sustainable wood are:

- Efficiently and sustainably managed woodlands
- Local supply
- Low level processing

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¹ For more information on the HETAS QAS, visit <http://www.hetas.co.uk/consumer/fuel-quality/>

² [http://www.usewoodfuel.co.uk/supplying-woodfuel/standards-and-accreditation/hetas-quality-assured-fuel-\(qas\).aspx](http://www.usewoodfuel.co.uk/supplying-woodfuel/standards-and-accreditation/hetas-quality-assured-fuel-(qas).aspx)